

Absence Reporting Questions and Answers

June 30, 2015

Absence Reporting

Q1: The May 2015, Benefit News states, “On July 1, 2015, Centralized Payroll and DOT employees will begin reporting all absences due to medical conditions and military duty to the Reed Group.” The new process document seems to be saying only if you’re going to a doctor? What if someone calls in sick with a cold or sinus and will not be seeing the doctor?

A1: To correctly identify all FMLA serious health conditions, all medical conditions must be reported to Reed Group in accordance with the work rule.

A medical condition has been defined as any of the following conditions:

1. You, or your family member (spouse, child, parent), have an illness or medical condition (including pregnancy), that will require:
 - a. A visit to a doctor or other health care provider that results in treatment (prescription medication, additional office visits, referrals to other medical providers, etc.)

– OR –

- b. Inpatient hospitalization, hospice care, or residential care
2. Birth of a Child
3. Adoption
4. Placement of a Child for Foster Care
5. Qualifying Exigency (Family Member’s Military Service)

If the absence from work falls into any of these categories, Reed Group must be notified. If an employee does not report an absence and someone from management becomes aware of it, the employer may initiate the notification to Reed Group. It is important to note that FMLA is a federally-mandated law.

Q2: What if a routine physical results in the renewal of prescription or follow-up treatments? Should the absence to attend the physical be reported to Reed?

A2: Prescription medication and/or other treatment suggest that a serious health condition may exist, so the absence should be reported to Reed Group. The key question in this instance is whether a serious health condition may be indicated.

Q3: What about intermittent absences such as headaches or employees that use sick leave every pay period? They probably are not seeing a physician. Would they still be required to contact Reed Group?

A3: Regular use of sick leave in every, or almost every, pay period indicates that a serious health condition may exist. If the employee has not seen a physician or been prescribed medication for their headaches, they would not need to contact Reed Group. However, the employing agency may contact Reed Group if absences occur frequently enough for the employer to believe that the employee might have a serious health condition. Reed Group may be notified by an

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employee, an employee's supervisor, or an employee's Human Resources Associate (HRA). It is important to note that FMLA is a federally-mandated law with which the State must comply.

Q4: I have a medical appointment in July. At this time I don't know if it will require a prescription or surgery. Do I call Reed?

A4: It depends. A medical appointment would be reported if it is a follow-up to a previous appointment or if the appointment leads to further treatment. If your appointment is for a routine physical that does not result in follow-up appointments or treatment of a new or existing medical condition, you do not need to notify Reed Group. See response to Question 1.

Q5: I go to the doctor every 6 months. I have no idea whether or not he/she will change a prescription, prescribe something new or do medical tests. Do I call Reed Group?

A5: Doctor visits every six months for the same medical condition meet the federal definition for job-protected leave under the FMLA, and the absences should be reported to Reed Group. The federal FMLA regulations define a chronic serious health condition as one that requires treatment visits two or more times in a year. You have up to two days from the start of an absence from work to report the absence to Reed Group.

Q6: I've had an FMLA certification every year for the last two years. Do I need to contact Reed Group?

A6: Reed Group has been notified of ongoing FMLA certifications and has mailed packets of information and forms to employees' homes. If you have an ongoing FMLA certification and you do not receive a packet from Reed Group by July 1, 2015, contact Reed Group within two days of the start of your first absence for your serious health condition. You do not need to notify Reed Group before you have an absence from work due to your serious health condition.

Q7: The way I'm reading this, an employee wouldn't have to call Reed Group if he/she were ill but not going to a doctor. Is that correct?

A7: Not necessarily. The nature of the illness dictates whether Reed Group needs to be contacted. If the illness meets any of the criteria in the response to Question 1, it should be reported to Reed Group. If intermittent leave has been certified (approved), the absence should be reported even if there is no doctor visit.

For example, employees who are absent due to a chronic condition (e.g., diabetes, asthma, high blood pressure) may not go to the doctor every time they have an absence related to the condition, but they may have been treated by the doctor for the medical condition in the past. If that prior visit resulted in ongoing treatment (prescription medication, additional treatment visits, referral to another health care provider, etc.), then Reed Group should be notified, as the absence may be protected.

Q8: Many employees who are on prescription medication(s) for the management of chronic conditions see physicians/specialists once a year for medication management appointments.

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Traditionally, this would be scheduled as a medical appointment and an hour or two of sick leave would be used. Since the employee receives a prescription from the physician, would this need to be reported to the Reed Group?

A8: If the absence from work is due to a medical condition as defined in Question 1, Reed Group should be notified.

Q9: When should pregnancy be reported to Reed? On the first visit to the OB/GYN?

A9: The first absence from work due to the pregnancy should be reported to Reed Group. This could be an absence for any medical condition directly related to the pregnancy (e.g., morning sickness, ultrasound, or the first visit to the OB/Gyn).

Q10: If my spouse and I are state employees, she is pregnant, and we both plan to be absent from work, do we both need to notify Reed Group?

A10: Yes, both employees must individually notify Reed Group of their absence from work due to pregnancy or the birth of a child. In the case of adoption or foster care placement, the same applies.

Q11: Under “When to Report an Absence,” it states, “When you or a family member....” Family member needs to be more defined—is it only family members covered under the employee’s insurance? For example, if an employee’s grown child, not covered under the employee’s insurance, is having a baby and the employee takes a day off for the birth, is that to be reported to Reed Group?

A11: The federal definition of family members for purposes of FMLA is:

- An employee’s spouse;
- An employee’s child under the age of 18, unless the child over 18 is incapable of self-care;
- An employee’s parent

The example in your question would not be reported to Reed Group. It describes an employee’s absence from work due to the birth of a grandchild; or the delivery of a child to the adult child of the employee. Neither of these events would qualify as FMLA covered absences from work. This does not mean that the employee cannot request vacation to go to see the new child. Insurance coverage does not play a part in the determination of FMLA leave.

Q12: Can I choose not to use FMLA for an absence from work when the absence qualifies for FMLA?

A12: No. The use of FMLA is not an election made by the employee; it is a job-protected leave status mandated by the federal government.

Q13: What happens if I refuse to give my information to Reed Group?

A13: The absence from work is not protected.

Notifications

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Q14: How will the supervisor or Human Resources Associate know if the employee notified Reed Group? Will we need to check LeavePro every day?

A14: No, a supervisor would not need to check LeavePro every day. The supervisor and HRA/PA will receive an email from Reed Group when an employee reports an absence from work due to a medical condition or other event that may be FMLA qualifying. The employee must report the absence within two days of the start of the absence. Reed Group will automatically send the employee all necessary forms and notices and manage the FMLA paperwork. The supervisor will again be notified by email when a determination has been made.

Q15: How will we know if an employee doesn't notify Reed Group about their absence? A previous FAQ stated that if an employee doesn't notify Reed Group, the supervisor or human resources office will notify Reed Group.

A15: You can identify whether or not the employee has reported the absence by receipt of an email. If the supervisor becomes aware of absences related to a medical condition that may not have been reported, or if a question arises regarding job protection for the work absence, the supervisor may initiate the process by contacting Reed Group.

Q16: How will management know about absence frequencies for the purposes of operational coverage?

A16: Employees will still need to follow their agency call-in procedures. Reed Group will email the frequency and duration of approved leave (continuous and intermittent) to the employee's supervisor (based on Span of Control in HRIS) and the Human Resources Associate (HRA). This is the same amount of information, or in some cases, more information than supervisors are currently receiving. This is the only information the federal law allows supervisors to have.

Privacy

Q17: I feel like you are invading my privacy. How is this legal?

A17: Federal law mandates an interactive process for job protection of absences from work due to a serious health condition. The law has been in place since 1993 and is written to provide employee protections. It is intended to be employee friendly but in order to take advantage of protections, certain information must be exchanged. Reed Group has been contracted to administer the FMLA in a neutral, non-adversarial way. With the introduction of Reed Group, the State is able to remove the supervisor from the process of certification. This isolates the employee's medical information from the supervisor they work with on a daily basis.

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Training

Q18: Is the training on-demand for all staff or just for PA and managers?

A18: The on-demand training is for all staff.

Q19: When will training be available?

A19: The following training and informational materials are available on-demand:

[Overview of Reed Group Absence Reporting](#) (approximately 10 minutes)

[Copy of slides](#)

[Online Portal Overview](#) – Take a tour of the login and absence reporting process (approximately 18 minutes)

[Absence Management FAQ 06/19/15](#) PDF

[LeavePro User Guide](#) PDF

In addition, live webinars, which contain the same information that is in the “Overview of Reed Group Absence Reporting” above, are scheduled on:

July 2, 2015, 2:00 p.m.

July 6, 2015, 10:30 a.m.

July 9, 10:00–10:30am

July 15, 3:00–3:30pm

You can register for these sessions at <https://das.iowa.gov/event-calendar-date/tab2/2015-07>

Other

Q20: When will we be able to log in to stateofiowa.leavepro.com?

A20: The portal has been turned off until July 1, 2015, as no one is monitoring the site until the contract officially begins. You can log in to LeavePro on July 1, 2015.

Q21: How much information will be required when calling in to the Reed Group?

A21: Reed Group will ask for:

- Employee Name;
- Last four digits of the employee’s Social Security Number;
- Home or personal cell phone number;
- Job information (date of hire, job title, part or full time, etc.);
- The state in which the employee works (Some employees work in a state other than Iowa);
- The type of leave needed (intermittent, continuous, reduced schedule);
- Information about leave usage.

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This is the minimum amount of information required to begin the interactive process.

Q22: Will we have wallet cards, similar to insurance cards, for quick and easy access?

A22: Yes. DAS will provide wallet cards to agency HRAs. The cards are expected to be at agencies by July 15, 2015.

Time Reporting

Q23. When employees complete their timesheets, how will they enter time (sick or FMLA) if they are not sure if it is FMLA? Will there be any training on which codes to use?

A23: There are no changes to time reporting; employees should continue to report time as they have in the past. If FMLA is not reported on a time sheet, the agency's HRA can enter an FMLA Leave Balance Correction P1. Similarly, if FMLA is reported on the time sheet, but it is later determined that FMLA did not apply to the absence, the agency's HRA can enter an FMLA Leave Balance Correction P1.